

Especially for parents of young children! 

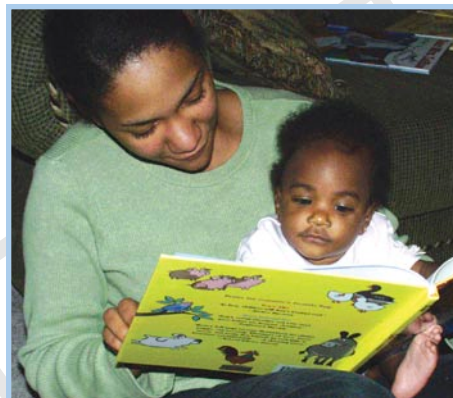
Baby's First Picture Books

 *Stories and Listening*

Can your baby sit on your lap and reach for things in front of her? Great! She's ripe for sharing picture books. Check out the following ideas you can use to introduce children's picture books to your little one.

What is the practice?

Infants first become interested in books when parents or caregivers help them learn to enjoy looking at pictures of people and things they see every day. Imagine the joy of a baby looking at things that are familiar and interesting. This is why book reading can be such fun!



What does the practice look like?

A baby sitting on an adult's lap is looking at a board book with pictures of baby animals. The child reaches and pats a picture of a kitten. The parent exclaims with delight, "Yes, you see the kitty!" Together they look at another page. Again, the baby reaches and touches the picture, and the parent describes what the baby sees. The back-and-forth activity enchants the baby. He enjoys looking through the book again and again.

How do you do the practice?

Try these simple ideas for helping your child discover the joys of books:

- Identify things in your child's world that always catch her attention. Examples could be pictures of baby faces, photographs of familiar people, animal board books, books of familiar objects, or anything your child seems to like.
- Board books and other picture books can be especially engaging. Public libraries often have books especially for babies that you can borrow. You can also enjoy making your own picture book! Small photo albums, for example, are good ways to show your infant pictures of familiar people, objects, and activities. Search the Web using **how to make books for babies** and you'll find many helpful ideas.
- Introduce new books to your baby when she is alert and attentive. Nestle your child in your lap or against your arm. If your child does not like to be held, place her in an infant seat or prop her in a sitting position in the corner of an armchair.
- Show your child the book and point at the first picture while saying its name. Follow your child's lead. Describe in short sentences what she looks at or touches. Book-reading times should be like a game of give-and-take. First, you do something (turn the page, for example). Then your child does something (smiles and gets excited). You keep the game going (saying, "The baby is looking at you!"). The more your child looks, touches, and otherwise enjoys the book-sharing activity, the better.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Is your child paying attention longer during reading times?
- Does your child reach, pat, or point at the pictures in books?
- Does your child recognize pictures of things she has seen before by smiling and getting excited?

Take a look at more interactions with picture books

Books Are Exciting

Jody is cuddled in his mother's lap as she shows him a book of baby faces. She turns each page while waiting for 8-month-old Jody to show some sign that he notices what he is looking at. Each time Jody moves and seems excited, his mom points to and describes the pictures in the book. The more they look at the book, the more absorbed Jody becomes in the parent-child activity.



Noisy Books

Sara, 5 months old, loves to bang things to make noises. Her mother drums her fingers on different toys when Sara is playing to encourage this. Mom starts a new game by showing Sara a book that has pages with different kinds of noise makers. She opens a page and pats the noise maker. The sound grabs Sara's attention. It's not long before Sara reaches and tries to make the sounds herself. Her mother helps her make the sounds while describing the pictures Sara sees and the noises that she makes.

Picture Book Delights

Sean, age 16 months, loves playing lap games with his parents. However, it is hard for Sean to hold his head up, even for short periods of time. His mom and dad, avid readers, are eager to help Sean enjoy books. They often lie down with Sean, propping his head in the crooks of their arms to help with head control. Sean's parents know he really likes pictures of animals. From the very first time he was shown an animal picture book, Sean showed excitement with every new page and every word and animal sound his parents uttered. The whole family enjoys looking at pictures and sharing picture books together.

